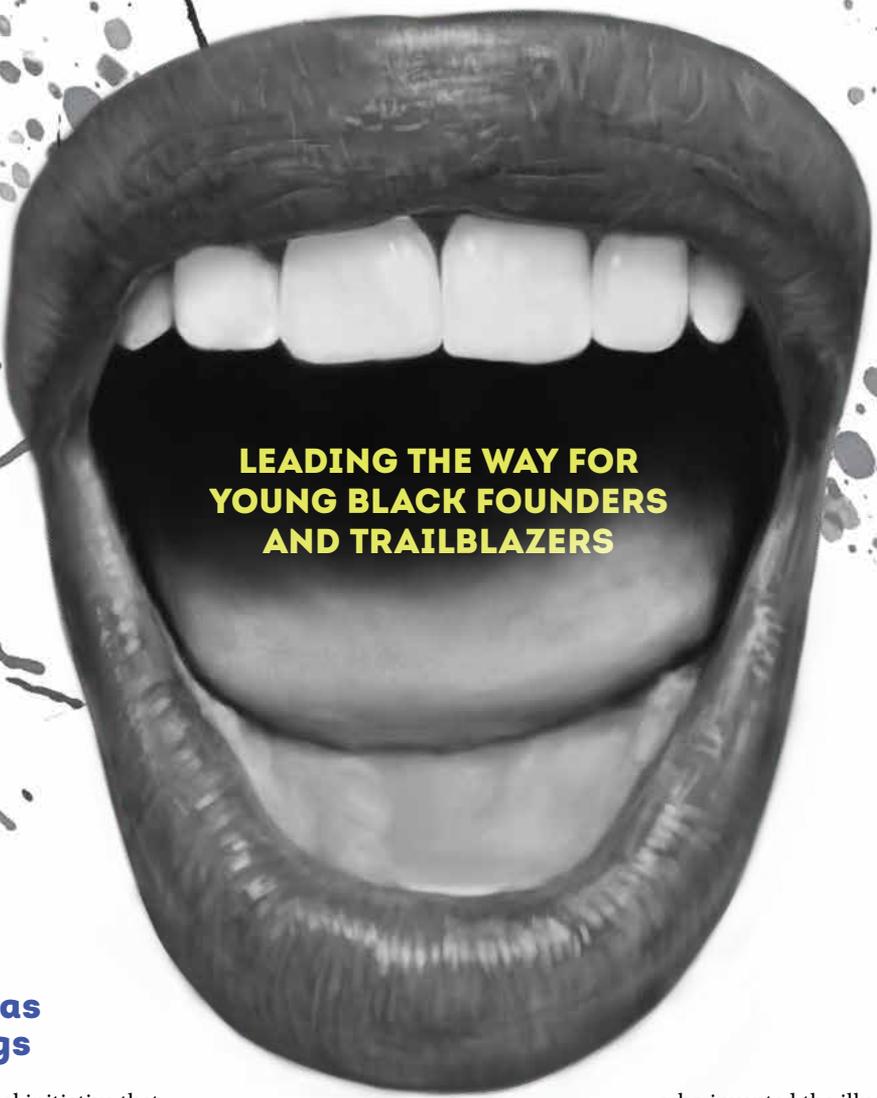


SAYING
IT

LOUD

BY MERLIN UWALAKA

ILLUSTRATION BY
KEON COURTNEY



**LEADING THE WAY FOR
YOUNG BLACK FOUNDERS
AND TRAILBLAZERS**

Black people as frontier beings

Say It Loud is a national initiative that supports brilliance among young Black people, and is a direct response to racism that excludes Black folks from visible participation in the advancement of civilization and technologies stemming from anti-Black racism.

For Black youth, aligning with Indigenous African heritage means adapting and responding to the time while being rooted in respect for community, ancestry and land. It means actively participating in the creation and maintaining of a better world.

Farley Flex, co-founder of Say It Loud Canada, refers to this as Black brilliance. Thanks to minds like Valerie L. Thomas,

who invented the illusion transmitter,

Shirley Ann Jackson, the first African-American woman to earn a doctorate degree from MIT, Mary Beatrice Davidson Kenner, who patented an adjustable sanitary belt with an inbuilt, moisture-proof napkin pocket, Garrett Morgan, who filed a patent for a traffic control device having a third “warning” position and musician Sister Rosetta Tharpe, we live in a world with high-speed internet, rock ‘n’ roll, 3D-movies, traffic lights and menstrual pads. These are only a handful of Black innovators and creators, and it is hard to imagine the world without the gifts of their brilliance. >

Say It Loud

“I am proud to say that Say It Loud is debunking negative stereotypes of Black youth by showcasing other Black youth as entrepreneurs, artists, designers, and so on,” says Roderick Brereton, co-founder of Say It Loud Canada. “Say It Loud markets the participant to show other Black youths that they can do what they are passionate about. It doesn’t matter if they are continental African or first generation; they are able to express Black pride and cultural identity seeing others like themselves who have achieved or are achieving.”

Say It Loud provides this support by promoting Black pride and positive cultural identity through STEM, entrepreneurship, social innovation, literary, culinary, visual performance and fashion arts. This year, Say It Loud will be presenting opportunities in several Canadian cities, including Edmonton, leading up to the first biennial Say It Loud National Youth Summit in Ottawa during Black History Month in February 2021.

“Say It Loud does a great job of encouraging creativity and innovation by showcasing representation through its ambassadorship program,” says Nneka Otogbolu, Edmonton’s Say It Loud ambassador.

“It’s important for our Black youth to see themselves represented in fields they are interested in. My hope is that they feel inspired to become innovators as they grow into future leaders in these fields.”

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A local initiative

Supporting Black innovators is a localized effort with Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) providing funding to the Edmonton chapter of Say It Loud.

“At ECF, we recognize that our community is a region with tremendous assets and that many of these assets are not fully realized because of inequality. Based on this, we strive to ensure we are supporting and creating inclusive and equitable communities, and we hope to achieve this by helping to provide opportunities to equity-seeking community groups such as Say It Loud to amplify community voice and power,” explains Otogbolu, who also serves as ECF’s director of communications and equity strategy.

The Say It Loud initiative supports financial literacy, sponsorship and mentorship programs. For example, Flip Floss & Fly is an online and in-class financial literacy/personal development program intended to provide tools for Black youth.

There are other intangible initiatives, like debunking the negative and limiting stereotypes attributed to being Black. Say It Loud also actively promotes its participants to show youth that their Blackness can be multifaceted.

The ability to create and learn from a place of safety is a catalyzing and freeing experience, one that isn’t usually accessible to Black youth living a post-colonial, capitalist experience. However, with the support of organizations like Say It Loud and ECF, opportunities for innovation and growth are being created in the Edmonton community. ■